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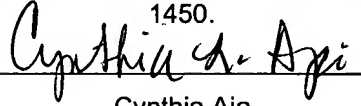
**Appl. No.** : 10/177,610  
**Applicant** : David M. Howard  
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**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Dear Sir:

Prior to examination of the above-identified patent application, please enter the following preliminary amendment.

**Amendments to the Specification** begin on page 2 of this paper.

**Amendments to the Claims** are reflected in the listing of claims which begins on page 3 of this paper.